



Legislation Text

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A MOTION condemning the preferential access to COVID-19 vaccinations for hospital donors and calling on the state Legislature to take action prohibiting such actions.

WHEREAS, as of February 1, 2021, there have been 77,017 positive cases of COVID-19 and 1,264 deaths in King County, and

WHEREAS, as of February 1, 2021, there have been 293,250 COVID-19 vaccine doses allocated across King County, approximately 250,063 of which have been administered, and

WHEREAS, at the metropolitan King County council meeting on January 12, 2021, public health-Seattle & King County director Patty Hayes expressed the unified goal to efficiently and equitably vaccinate as many King County residents as possible, and

WHEREAS, the federal government has announced that it will send an initial shipment of one million doses directly to 6,500 pharmacy stores across the country beginning on February 11, 2021, and

WHEREAS, as of January 18, 2021, all older adults in Washington state over the age of 65, and some people age 50 and older who are living in multigenerational households, are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, and

WHEREAS, many seniors and vulnerable populations throughout the county are struggling to access and navigate the current public health landscape in order to sign up for and receive COVID-19 vaccines, and

WHEREAS, the digital divide and mobility access continue to wreak havoc on many low-income seniors, Black, Indigenous and People of Color ("BIPOC") and vulnerable populations with disabilities and

who are unhoused, making it difficult to sign up to receive a vaccine or travel to an appropriate vaccination site, and

WHEREAS, BIPOC, immigrant and senior communities, and essential workers have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, and

WHEREAS, centuries of systemic racism have led some in the BIPOC communities to be distrustful of vaccinations administered by the government, and

WHEREAS, trust and positive public perception of the state, county and local rollout of vaccines is critical to ensure the rapid and effective deployment of vaccines throughout our region, and

WHEREAS, it was reported in the Seattle Times and other media outlets that three medical systems in our county gave preferential treatment and special access to COVID-19 vaccinations to financial donors and board members, and

WHEREAS, providing vaccines to nonpriority populations and those with financial influence is unethical, inequitable and prevents our most vulnerable communities from being vaccinated and betrays the equity and social justice values of King County government, and

WHEREAS, these unethical actions are in complete contrast to the Hippocratic Oath to do no harm, and

WHEREAS, in order to end this pandemic as soon as possible in King County, local and state governments must ensure that the most-marginalized communities and frontline essential workers are prioritized for the COVID-19 vaccine instead of wealthy donors to organizations and businesses;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The council strongly condemns the actions of those hospitals and businesses that have given preferential treatment to high-profile donors, board members and family and friends, allowing them to receive COVID-19 vaccinations before more-vulnerable priority populations.

B. The council recognizes that preferential treatment by medical systems in our region leads to distrust and inhibits priority populations from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine equitably.

C. The council calls on Washington Governor Jay Inslee to issue an executive order immediately prohibiting special access to vaccinations and requiring COVID-19 vaccines be distributed equitably in Washington state.

D. The council calls on the Washington state Legislature to take action in the 2021 legislative session to prohibit medical systems from distributing vaccines inequitably by, for example, giving preferential access to donors or board members.

E. The council calls on the Washington state Department of Health to allocate vaccines equitably to serve populations at higher risk, including low-income communities of color.